

## HOUSE RESOLUTION 93

By Gilmore

A RESOLUTION to honor Audrey Bryant Watkins of Nashville.

WHEREAS, in the course of the history of the great State of Tennessee the exact details of many important social changes and groundbreaking actions have been lost to the winds of time – not because of the lack of their importance, but the lack of comprehension by the public as to the truly special achievement taking place at that moment in time; and

WHEREAS, such was the occasion in 1954, when sixteen-year-old Audrey Bryant Watkins became the first African-American in Nashville, and possibly the first in the entire state, to appear on a local television program when she became a regular on the Noel Ball Show on WSIX, now WKRN; and

WHEREAS, a then-student at Haynes High School, Audrey Bryant Watkins's beautiful smile led to her start as a performer as she pantomimed hit records of singers such as Etta James and Sarah Vaughn on the television program and sang live at events all over Nashville and the state of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, after her two-year television stint, Ms. Watkins performed with the T.H. Williams Orchestra and became a recording artist in her own right in 1959, as evidenced by the inclusion of her work in the Country Music Hall of Fame's acclaimed album and companion exhibit: *Night Train to Nashville: Music City Rhythm & Blues, 1945-1970*; and

WHEREAS, Audrey Watkins would go on to attend Tennessee State University and later in life would work for a number of area colleges and universities as well as for former United States Senator Jim Sasser during her professional career; and

WHEREAS, a true pioneer in Nashville and Tennessee's Black History, Ms. Watkins appeared on the Symposia television show with Bobby Jones in 1978 on Nashville's Channel 8,

and was featured in an article on Nashville's Black History in 1990 by *Nashville Pride* and in a Black History Salute by WTVF, Channel 5, in Nashville in 1991; and

WHEREAS, included in a number of stories and articles over the year in *Nashville Pride*, she was the subject of a wonderful tribute published by the newspaper on March 31, 2000, that was simply titled *Audrey Bryant: A Musical Legend*; and

WHEREAS, the massive success of the *Night Train to Nashville* compilation album introduced new generations to the amazing musical talents of Audrey Watkins, who later received a special certificate when the album won a Grammy in 2005 for Best Historical Album; and

WHEREAS, it is highly appropriate that we pause in our deliberations and specially recognize an outstanding individual who should be accorded the respect and admiration due such a pioneer in Tennessee history; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor and commend Audrey Bryant Watkins of Nashville, saluting both her talent as a performer and her remarkable personal courage in breaking the color-barrier on television in Nashville and the State of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.